THE NEW SUNDAY EXPRESS

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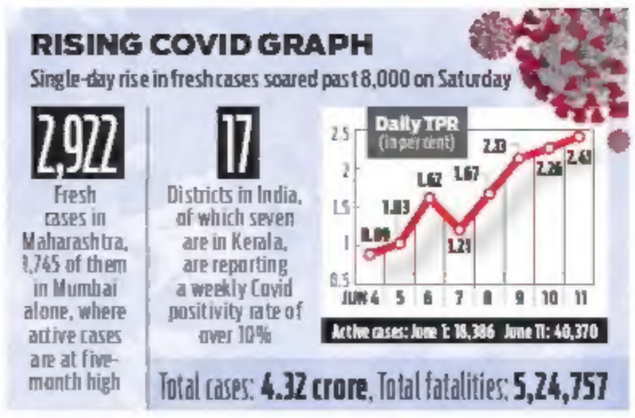
RISING COVID GRAPH
Single-day rise in fresh cases soared past 8,000 on Saturday
2,922
Fresh cases in Maharashtra, 1,745 of them in Mumbai alone, where active cases are at five-month high
17
Districts in India, of which seven are in Kerala, are reporting a weekly Covid positivity rate of over 10%
Daily TPR (in per cent)
0.89
1.83
1.62
1.21
1.67
2.13
2.26
2.43
JUN 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Active cases: June 1: 18,386 June 11: 40,370
Total cases: 4.32 crore, Total fatalities: 5,24,757

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Surprise gain for BJP in photo-finish

Setback for Congress in Haryana as Ajay Maken loses; BJP wins three seats in Maharashtra

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

AFTER night-long suspense, the BJP emerged victorious with surprise wins in the fiercely contested Rajya Sabha elections in Haryana and Maharashtra, where results were delayed due to allegations of voting malpractices.

In Haryana, BJP-backed independent candidate Kartikeya Sharma defeated Congress leader Ajay Maken. The media baron's win was thanks to two Congress legislators — Kuldeep Bishnoi who voted against his party's candidate and Kiran Choudhary whose vote was disqualified by the Election Commission. Following Bishnoi's cross-voting, the Congress expelled him from all party posts. The BJP bagged the second seat from Haryana as well, with Krishan Lal Panwar being declared the winner.

The results were declared around 2.30 am on Saturday after counting was put on hold for nine hours. Counting began only after the BJP's petition to the Election Commission seeking cancellation of two Congress votes was rejected.

In the 90-member state assembly, 89 MLAs cast their votes. Of these, Congress MLA Kiran Choudhry's vote was cancelled as she "wrongly cast her ballot". With this, the total number of votes became 88 as independent MLA Balraj Kundu had already decided to abstain from voting.

In a nail-biting finish, Panwar and Shama, who was primarily sponsored by the Janata Party and supported by the BJP, were respectively declared elected. The value of votes polled by the BJP was 3,600. Panwar received 36 first-preference votes while Sharma got 23. The vote value of the Congress was 2,900.

In Maharashtra, the BJP won three out of the six seats up for grabs in the bitter contest that went down to the wire, with Piyush Goyal, Anil Bonde and Dhananjay Mahadik emerging victorious. From the ruling MVA coalition, Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut, NCP's Praful Patel and Congress' candidate Imran Pratapgarhi made it to the Upper House. P10

BJP's strength down to 92; Cong gains 3

The BJP's strength in the Rajya Sabha has fallen from 95 to 92 while the number of Congress members has gone up from 29 to 31 after results of the Rajya Sabha elections

Mamata seeks to lead Oppn's prez poll fight, calls 22 leaders for talks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi/Kolkata

WITH the Presidential election set to be held on July 18, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday wrote to 22 opposition leaders to attend a meeting convened by her at her New Delhi residence on June 15 to present a joint strategy.

In the letter, Mamata called for a strong and effective opposition comprising "all progressive forces" to resist the "divisive force".

She said the meeting is to discuss strategies for a "fruitful confluence" of Opposition voices. "At a time when our democracy is going through troubling times, I believe that a fruitful confluence of opposition votes is the need of the hour to echo the deprived and unrepresented communities," she wrote.

Mamata's move, coming days after Congress leader Sonia Gandhi reached out to the Opposition leaders on fielding a common presidential candidate, is being seen as an attempt by her to take a lead role in the negotiations.

Mamata is trying "to tell the Congress that it can't be the leading force for the opposition coalition. The invite has been sent to opposition parties—AAP, YSRCP, and TRS—that the Congress may not be willing to ally with," said an opposition leader.

Sonia is one of the invitees for the meeting—a significant development given that relations between the Congress and TMC had soured ahead of the recent Goa Assembly polls.

INVITEES

1. Arvind Kejriwal (CM, Delhi)
2. Pinarayi Vijayan (CM, Kerela)
3. Naveen Patnaik (CM, Odisha)
4. Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao (CM, Telangana)
5. M K Stalin (CM, Tamil Nadu)
6. Uddhav Thackeray (CM, Maharastra)
7. Hemant Soren (CM, Jharkhand)
8. Bhagwant Singh Mann (CM, Punjab)
9. Sonia Gandhi (president, INC)
10. Lalu Prasad Yadav (president, RJD)
11. D Raja (general secretary, CPI)
12. Sitaram Yechury (general secretary, CPIM)
13. Akhilesh Yadav (president, Samajwadi Party)
14. Sharad Pawar (president, NCP)
15. Jayant Chaudhary (national president, RLD)
16. H D Kumaraswamy (former CM of Karnataka)
17. H D Deve Gowda (MP, former PM of India)
18. Farooq Abdullah (president, JKNC)
19. Mehbooba Mufti (president, PDP)
20. Sukhbir Singh Badal (president, Akali Dal)
21. Pawan Chamling (president, Sikkim Democratic Front)
22. K M Kader Mohideen (president, IUML)

EXPRESS READ

15K people can attend PM's yoga day event

Bengaluru: With PM Narendra Modi all set to participate in the International Yoga Day event in Mysuru, Karnataka's Covid Technical Advisory committee has given nod for 15,000 people to take part in it. Since the event will be held between 6 am and 7.45 am in an open area, it was felt that the risk is less, TAC sources said. | P4

WITH THIS ISSUE
PUNJAB BLOOD AND BOOTY
PLUS 12 PAGES
MAGAZINE

HATE SPEECH PROTEST TURNS DEADLY; 2 KILLED IN RANCHI

Security personnel stand guard in an area of Ranchi on Saturday | PTI

New Delhi: Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Saturday ordered a high-level probe into the deadly violence over hate speech by BJP functionaries that rocked Ranchi and left two young boys dead and 24 injured. The state capital has been blanketed by heavy police cover. In West Bengal, violence continued in Howrah. Protesters clashed with the police and several houses were set on fire.

Gang issuing fake Aadhaar to Bangla migrants busted, 9 held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A software engineer who lost his job during the nationwide lockdown imposed due to Covid-19 pandemic, a pharmacist and a businessman are part of a nine-member gang arrested by the police on charges of issuing fake Aadhaar cards and other government documents to illegal immigrants from Bangladesh residing in the city. The accused include three Bangladeshi migrants.

Around 92 Aadhaar enrolment forms with seals of BBMP health officers, 31 Aadhaar cards, 28 voter IDs, 26 fake letter-heads, 16 mobile phones, 13 PAN cards, five seals of BBMP health officers, two laptops, two printers, ATM cards and other documents have been seized from the accused.

The fraudulent activities came to light after the Madhanayakanahalli police of the Bengaluru Rural district arrested a Bangladeshi national identified as Sheikh Ismail Kitab Ali in connection with a ₹18 lakh theft from an ATM kiosk at Chikkagollarahatti on April 15, this year. P3

Ravi, Poojary defend text revision

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Mangaluru/Shivamogga

BJP National General Secretary C T Ravi on Saturday said that revision of textbooks being carried out by the BJP-led state government is intended to set right "anomalies" and to instill a sense of nationalism among people.

He was speaking at an interaction programme on 'Textbook Politics - Truth and Myth' organised by Citizens Council at Sangha Nikethan in Mangaluru.

Meanwhile, in Shivamogga, Social Welfare Minister Kota Srinivas Poojary said a series of lies were being spread against the revision of textbooks which is a routine procedure followed whenever required.

JUMBO WITH LONGEST TUSKS SAYS GOODBYE

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

BHOGESHWAR — the tusker with the longest tusks among Asian elephants — is no more. One of the most popular jumbos for tourists in the Kabini backwaters, Bhogeshwar, 60, died due to age-related issues. The gentle giant was a regular sight for tourists at Nagarahole and Bandipur Tiger Reserves. He was a sight to behold for tribals and locals living in the region.

According to forest department officials, Bhogeshwar was found dead in Gundre Range of Bandipur Tiger Reserve (BTR) at around 9.30 am. BTR Director Ramesh Kumar told *The New Sunday Express* that an autopsy conducted on the animal has confirmed that he died due to natural causes and had no injury marks.

Foresters on the ground, however, said Bhogeshwar's health began deteriorating since a week after he had a fight with another tusker last week. CONTINUED ON: P5

Idgah row: BBMP orders status quo

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN a fresh development in the Chamarajpet Idgah Maidan controversy, the BBMP on Saturday issued an order that status quo should be maintained over the 2.5-acre land.

S M Srinivasa, BBMP Special Commissioner said that the decision was taken after the Central Muslim Association Karnataka also submitted records.

"Only after the legal department of BBMP submits its report, the next step will be taken. Until then, status quo will be maintained," he said.

The BBMP officer explained that the order on maintaining status quo means that the present activities of using it as a playground, for religious prayers, or any other ongoing activities will continue.

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